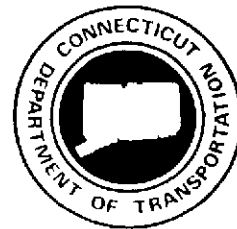


Hartford West MIS Newsline

Interstate 84 Corridor Planning Study

Hotline: 1-800-786-2191



October, 1997

An important decision will have to be made in the next year regarding to the Hartford West transportation corridor. Should scarce state and federal financial resources be allocated to improve the corridor's transportation system or should the existing system be maintained in a state of good repair, while we all live with its deficiencies. Since major transportation investments often take more than a decade from initial conception to "ribbon-cutting," this is your chance to tell us what the future of transportation in this corridor should be.

Although only a handful of people attended the last public meeting, opinions varied and some conflicting goals were expressed. Several participants expressed support for further development of mass transit options within the study area, as well as concern about the community impacts of widening I-84. In most cases, study area residents perceive that the quality of life within the corridor is diminished in some way by the present configuration of I-84 and by the diversion of traffic from the congested highway to other study area arterials, such as Farmington Avenue and New Britain Avenue. We take these concerns very seriously.

Without additional transportation capacity in the Hartford West corridor, the existing levels of congestion and delay are likely to increase. To meet projected travel demand we have developed six groups of transportation options, termed Reasonable Alternative Packages (RAP's). They range from a No-Build option, under which the existing roadway network would be maintained with no addition to its capacity or scope, to a number of more expensive capital programs such as the construction of a Light Rail Transit, Busway, Commuter Rail system, High Occupancy Vehicle lanes or general purpose lanes.

Inside this newsletter, you will find maps and text which present the RAP's in detail. While these RAP's are preliminary in nature, they have been developed in consultation with the elected officials and professional staff of all the study area communities in an attempt to spell out what consequences of each strategy might be.

As always, we invite your participation in this planning process. The last page of this newsletter shows how you can get involved! On behalf of the Connecticut Department of Transportation, I thank you for your continued interest and support.

Bill Messner, Policy and Planning Administrator
Connecticut Department of Transportation

What's The RAP ?

RAP is an acronym for a Reasonable Alternative Package. A RAP is a grouping of transportation actions or strategies with common themes. For example, one RAP could be a grouping of light rail transit options for the study area. As we look at different strategies which can address the needs and issues of Interstate 84 and the roadways which carry traffic to and from the highway, the grouping of strategies into RAPs will make it possible to compare the benefits and disadvantages of the different transportation techniques and to ultimately focus on those actions which will best serve the future of the study area.

Study Milestones:

The May 15, 1997, Public Informational Meeting and the July release of the draft *Statement of Purpose and Need* report were the result of the first nine months of the Hartford West Major Investment Study (MIS).

In the coming months, we will hold additional public meetings, with the **next meeting** scheduled for **October 29 in West Hartford**. We also anticipate the public release of the following technical reports:

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- Screening and Scoping Report (November);
- Alternatives Performance Technical Report (November); and
- Draft MIS Report (February).

Copies of these draft reports will be available at city and town offices and at local libraries. Questions regarding the public meetings and study reports can be directed to the Hartford West project office at 1-800-786-2191.

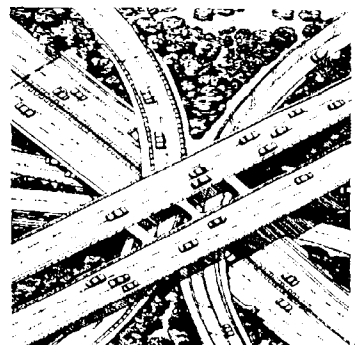
THE PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEES

- *Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) - composed of elected officials representing the municipalities in the study area.*
- *Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) - composed of municipal, state and federal agencies, and representatives of transportation service providers in the study area.*

The Six RAPs What They Offer

RAP 1 : No Build

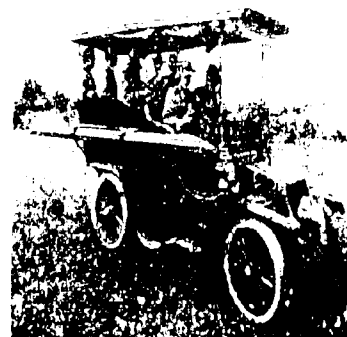
This alternative is the most straight-forward. It is the maintenance and repair of the existing transportation network with no additions to capacity or scope. This alternative is the lowest cost choice, but it is not free. Over the next 25 years (as forecast by the Hartford West Study Team) it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars just to repair and replace existing system elements such as pavement and bridges. Maintenance of the existing system may not address many of the goals and objectives laid out by the public at the beginning of the study process.



RAP 2 : Transportation Systems Management (TSM)/Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

TSM and TDM are generic terms that encompass a wide range of strategies used to gain greater effectiveness from the existing physical transportation infrastructure. TSM measures typically include: intersection reconfiguration, modification and coordination of traffic signals, addition of turn lanes, lane widening, and construction of roadway shoulders.

TDM measures typically include: the collection of parking fees at work sites, the payment of a flexible transportation allowance in place of employer-paid parking; priority treatments for High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV's) such as carpools, vanpools and buses, increased or redesigned transit service, revised development standards for parking, and on-site commercial development to foster greater utilization of transit, bicycles and walking; and the encouragement of flexible work hours and telecommuting. Other TDM measures address the possibilities for enhancing transit system operations, through increased service, greater frequency of service, or services to new destination points. These enhancements can utilize any of the existing transit modes, including local, express and/or shuttle buses, or commuter vans.



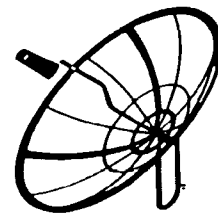


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RAP 3 : Freeway Operations and Reconstruction

This RAP may include reconstruction of certain freeway sections or implementation of operational strategies such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). ITS is the application of a wide range of techniques to provide travelers with up-to-the-minute information on highway congestion, accidents, and other problems. Examples of ITS technology include: Variable Message Signs, dedicated telephone lines, Highway Advisory Radio stations, and Internet Web sites. Another ITS strategy is ramp metering which involves the installation of traffic signals on freeway on-ramps. The minor delay that a motorist experiences waiting for the green light at the on-ramp is offset by improved highway traffic flow.



RAP 4 : Fixed Guideway Transit

RAP 4A - Light Rail Transit (LRT)/Busway : Light rail technology is an advanced form of the traditional streetcar. Typical LRT systems can include both grade-separated (off-street) segments and on-street operation. LRT vehicles are powered by electric motors and draw power from an electric cable overhead. They are approximately 75-90 feet long (twice the length of a bus), and can run in either single-car or two-four car (multiple unit) trains.

Several older light rail systems in the United States have survived from an earlier era (1900-1930), such as the Green Line of Boston's "T" subway system, and several lines of the SEPTA system in Philadelphia. Since 1975, a number of metropolitan areas have created new LRT systems as a cornerstone of their effort to encourage the use of transit and to revitalize their downtowns. These include Buffalo, NY, Baltimore, MD, Pittsburgh, PA, Portland, OR, San Diego, CA, San Jose, CA, and others. Several study area corridors are being evaluated for LRT implementation:

- Within the I-84 median from Union Station to the Westfarms Mall and to Fienemann Road area;
- Along Farmington Avenue from Union Station to West Hartford Town Center; and
- Along the railroad right-of-way from Union Station to Downtown New Britain and Crooked Street in Plainville.

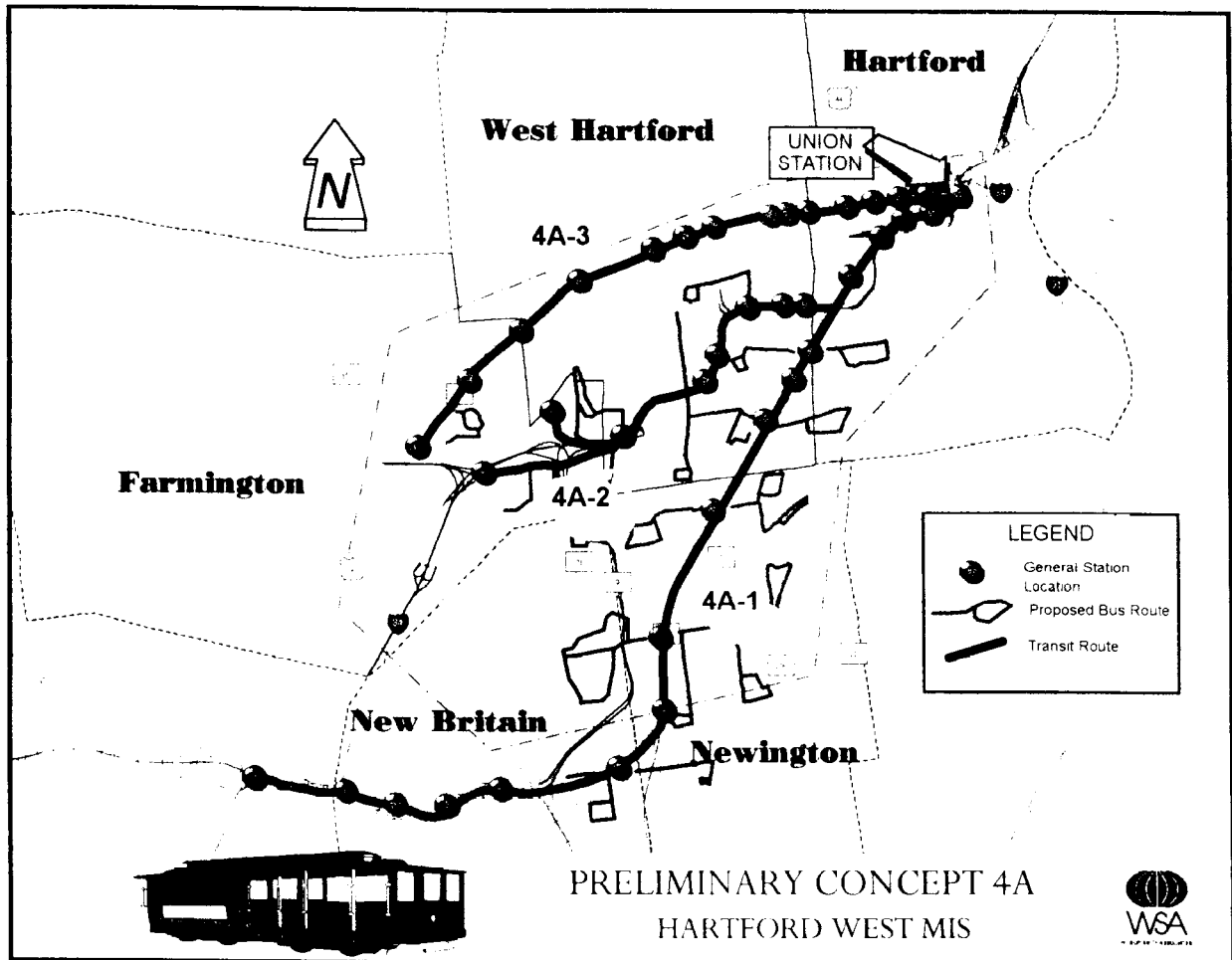


These conceptual LRT systems would be from 3 to 12 miles in length, with stations located at approximate half-mile intervals.

Another fixed-guideway alternative, similar in alignment to the LRT, is the concept of a busway. This would consist of a designated or grade-separated bus facility, such as a bus lane on Farmington Avenue, or a bus-only right-of-way within the I-84 median or within the railroad right-of-way. The busway concept offers greater flexibility than a LRT in that buses can enter and exit the exclusive bus facility from existing bus routes. Pittsburgh, PA. has a busway.

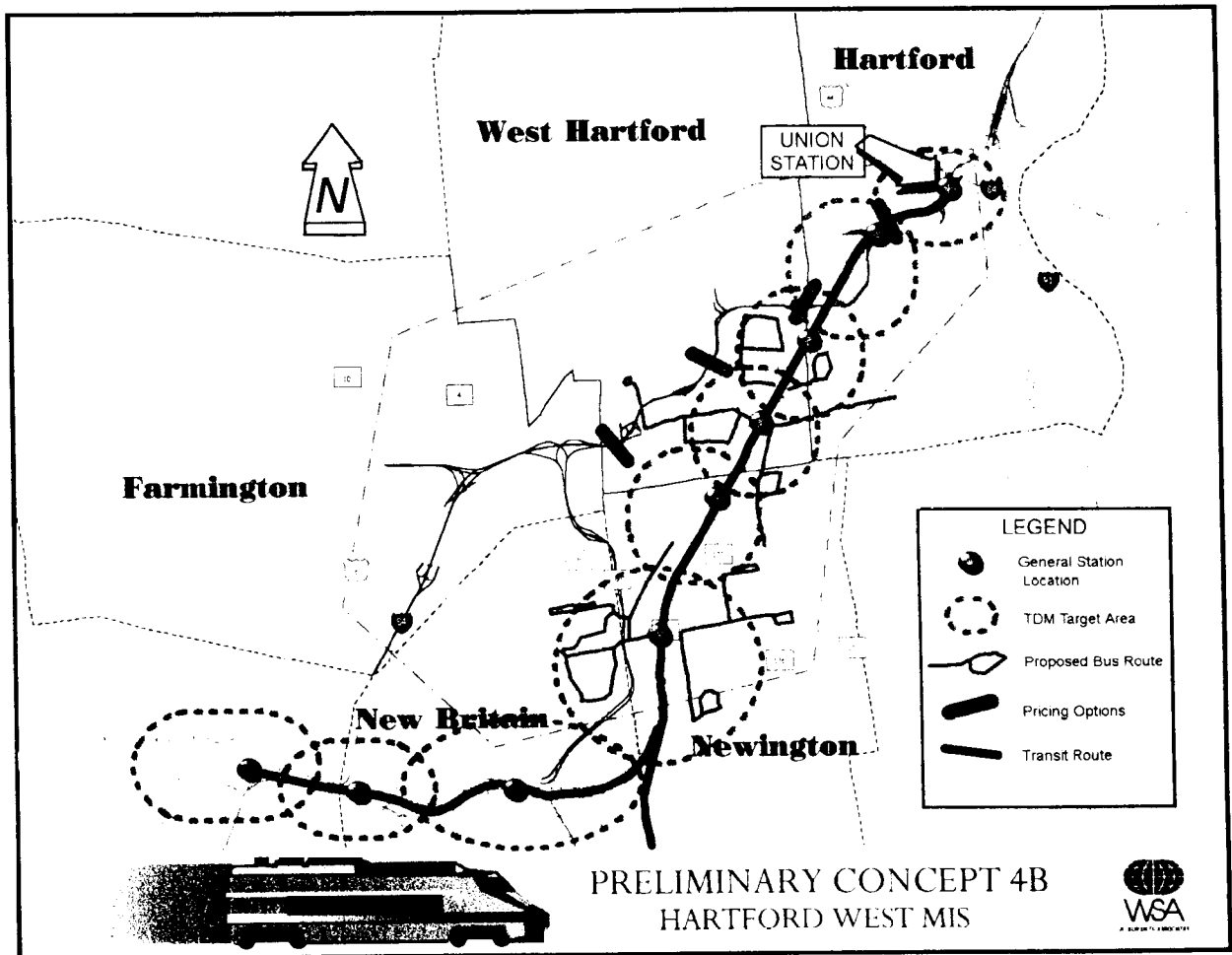
RAP 4B - Commuter Rail : The commuter rail mode is distinguished from light rail transit by the greater speed and capacity of the equipment, greater distance between stations, and the orientation of commuter rail services to park-and-ride or drop-off access, versus pedestrian access. Commuter rail trains typically operate at speeds up to 70 m.p.h. depending on track characteristics and curvature.

Many newer commuter systems are using a commuter rail pattern of operation, including Virginia Railway Express in Northern Virginia, and Shoreline East in New Haven. The proposed system in RAP 4B would run initially from Plainville (Crooked Street-I-84/Rt. 72 junction) to Hartford, a distance of approximately 12 miles. It would utilize the existing railroad corridor located to the east of I-84.

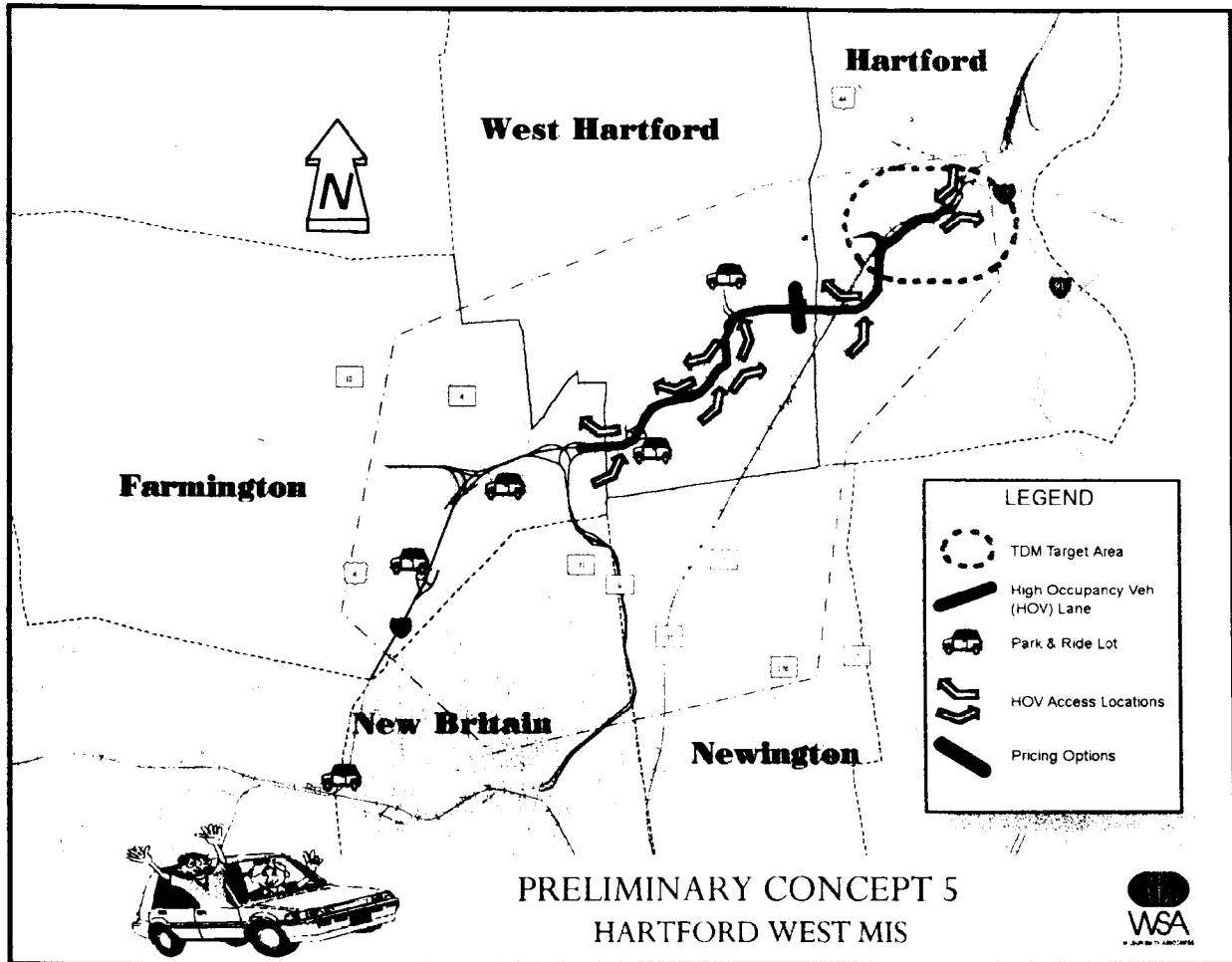


RAP 4 A : LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT(LRT)/BUSWAY: THREE ALTERNATIVES:

1. RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY UNION STATION, HARTFORD TO DOWNTOWN NEW BRITAIN AND CROOKED STREET, PLAINVILLE
2. I-84 MEDIAN - UNION STATION TO FIENEMANN ROAD AREA
3. FARMINGTON AVENUE - UNION STATION TO WEST HARTFORD



RAP 4B : COMMUTER RAIL ALTERNATIVE :
RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY - UNION STATION, HARTFORD TO DOWNTOWN NEW BRITAIN
AND CROOKED STREET, PLAINVILLE



RAP 5 : I-84 HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANES
I-84 MEDIAN FROM FIENEMANN ROAD TO DOWNTOWN HARTFORD



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RAP 5 : HOV Lane

Designating lanes, ramps or parking spaces specifically for High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV's), such as carpools, commuter vans and buses is a strategy that can allow metropolitan areas to increase roadway passenger carrying capacity during peak periods. HOV lanes have been in use on sections of I-84 and I-91 in the Greater Hartford region.

In terms of physical characteristics, HOV lanes typically are 12-foot wide, with a 4-foot buffer area between the HOV lane and the general purpose lanes. Crossing of the buffer is prohibited and often designated ramps allow exclusive access to and from the HOV lane. Supporting measures, such as HOV priority at on-ramps and HOV parking at reduced rates can be employed to increase the effectiveness of these facilities.

The HOV concept for the Hartford West corridor would include bus route changes and increased bus service to gain maximum effectiveness and utilization of the HOV lanes.

RAP 6 : General Purpose Lanes

The current and future travel demands placed on Interstate 84 suggest that the addition of a general purpose traffic lane in each direction on the highway could improve traffic operations. It would also require a more limited taking of property than the HOV alternative. This alternative could also relieve pressure on the parallel arterial streets such as Farmington Avenue and may diminish cut-through traffic in residential neighborhoods adjacent to the highway.

Documenting Study Findings: The Screening and Scoping

The Screening and Scoping Report lays out an initial set of transportation improvement alternatives for the study area. These are the RAPs as described in this newsletter. The use of the term 'packages' acknowledges the fact that no single improvement can meet all of the corridor's future transportation needs.

In the Screening and Scoping Report, the RAP's are compared with defined study goals and objectives to evaluate their projected performance. Evaluation criteria include environmental, social and economic factors, as well as measures of transportation effectiveness. The Screening and Scoping Report identifies locations where environmental and social impacts may be caused, and also allows us to rule out alternative strategies that may be difficult or unrealistic to implement. Together, the Screening and Scoping Report, and the RAP Performance Technical Report which follows it, will suggest the necessary issues for investigation during the Environmental Study Phase of the MIS process.

We welcome you to review the draft Scoping and Screening Report and provide comments, suggestions and ideas. Copies will be available at your town or city hall. The input received during this phase of the project will contribute to our understanding of the study area's critical issues and will be reflected in the Draft MIS Report.



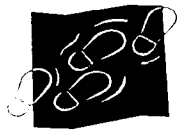
Photo:

*I-84 Evening Rush Hour Congestion
Looking westbound at the Sisson Avenue
eastbound off ramp, October, 1997*

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What's Happening?

You're Invited

To: Public Information Meeting

Date: October 29, 1997

Time: 6:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Location: West Hartford Town
Hall Auditorium (50 South Main
Street)

Hope to See You There!!!

How You Can Get Involved

There are several ways you can stay informed and involved as this study progresses:

- * You can attend the Public Information Meeting scheduled for October 29th, (6:30 - 9:00 PM) in the West Hartford Town Hall Auditorium.
- * You can contact your community representative on the TAC through your Town/City Hall.
- * You can read reports on the project at your local library.



You can also use the Hartford West Hotline to contact the project team.

1-800-786-2191